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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
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STATEMENT OF REPRESENTATIVE MARY ROSE OAKAR (D-OHIO)
BEFORE THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON
HISTORIC PRESERVATION AND COINAGE
CONCERNING THE SUSAN B. ANTHONY COIN ACT OF 1978.

WEDNESDAY, MAY 31, 1978

MR. CHAIRMAN, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN: I WISH TO COMMEND THE CHAIRMAN OF THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON HISTORIC PRESERVATION AND COINAGE MR. WALTER FAUNTROY FOR HOLDING THESE HEARINGS TODAY ON THE PROPOSED DOLLAR COIN. MY COLLEAGUE CONGRESSWOMAN PAT SCHROEDER AND MYSELF INTRODUCED A BILL TO PLACE THE PORTRAIT OF SUSAN B. ANTHONY ON THIS NEW DOLLAR COIN, AND WE THANK THE CHAIRMAN FOR ALLOWING US TO APPEAR BEFORE THE SUBCOMMITTEE.

THE PROPOSED DOLLAR COIN IS SMALLER THAN OUR PRESENT EISENHOWER DOLLAR, AND IT IS BELIEVED IT WILL BE MORE USEFUL. THE DEPARTMENT OF TREASURY STATES THAT THIS SMALLER DOLLAR COIN WILL OFFER COST SAVINGS BY REPLACING SOME OF THE DEMAND FOR ONE DOLLAR BILLS. ONE DOLLAR BILLS HAVE AN AVERAGE LIFETIME OF 18 MONTHS, AND COST ABOUT 1.5 CENTS TO PRODUCE. THE PROPOSED DOLLAR COIN WOULD COST APPROXIMATELY THREE CENTS TO PRODUCE, BUT WOULD HAVE AN AVERAGE LIFETIME OF 15 YEARS. THE INTRODUCTION OF THE SMALLER DOLLAR COIN INTO OUR CIRCULATING COINAGE

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SYSTEM SHOULD PROVE TO BE A VERY PRACTICAL AND "MONEY-SAVING" MOVE ON THE PART OF THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT.

HOWEVER, MR. CHAIRMAN, THE ADMINISTRATION HAS PROPOSED THAT THE NEW COIN BE ISSUED WITH A SO-CALLED CONTEMPORARY VERSION OF THE LIBERTY HEAD DESIGN ON THE OBVERSE SIDE. THIS WAS VERY DISAPPOINTING TO MANY AMERICANS INCLUDING THE CONGRESSWOMAN'S CAUCUS, WHO HAD WRITTEN TO THE SECRETARY OF THE TREASURY, REQUESTING THAT THE DEPARTMENT PROPOSE THE PORTRAIT OF SUSAN B. ANTHONY. (I HAVE FOR SUBMISSION INTO THE HEARING RECORD A COPY OF THE LETTER DATED MARCH 11, 1978 THE CAUCUS WROTE TO MR. BLUMENTAHAL. WE NEVER RECEIVED A RESPONSE WHICH I FIND SURPRISING AND ALARMING.)

SENATOR PROXMIRE, CHAIRMAN OF THE SENATE BANKING, HOUSING AND URBAN AFFAIRS COMMITTEE HAS ALSO INTRODUCED A SIMILAR BILL IN THE SENATE, AND HAS REITERATED HIS SUPPORT FOR THE PORTRAIT OF MS. ANTHONY. I AM ALSO AWARE THAT YOU MR. CHAIRMAN ARE OPEN-MINDED AS TO WHOSE PORTRAIT IS PLACED ON THE DOLLAR COIN.

I WISH TO EMPHASIZE THAT THIS BILL HAS THE FULL SUPPORT OF A WIDE SPECTRUM OF WOMEN'S ORGANIZATIONS INCLUDING THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS, THE NATIONAL ORGANIZATION OF WOMEN, THE NATIONAL WOMEN'S POLITICAL CAUCUS, AND THE DAUGHTERS OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION. (I HAVE LETTERS FROM SOME OF THESE GROUPS FOR SUBMISSION INTO THE RECORD.)

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THAT IS WHY MY COLLEAGUE PAT SCHROEDER AND MYSELF ARE HERE TODAY, TO REQUEST THAT THE SUBCOMMITTEE CONSIDER OUR BILL TO PLACE MS. ANTHONY'S PORTRAIT ON THE OBVERSE SIDE OF THIS NEW DOLLAR COIN.

HAVING AN ACTUAL WOMAN PORTRAYED ON A COIN IS NOT A UNIQUE CONCEPT. AS EARLY AS 1837, A WOMAN APPEARED ON THE CIRCULATING COINAGE IN GREAT BRITAIN, AND AS EARLY AS 1835, SPAIN CIRCULATED COINAGE WITH THE PROFILE OF ISABEL. IN 1892 THE NETHERLANDS CIRCULATED COINS WITH THE PORTRAIT OF WILHELMINA. THUS, I WOULD SUGGEST THAT THE CONCEPT OF A PORTRAIT OF A WOMAN ON CIRCULATING COINAGE IN THE WESTERN WORLD IS NOT NEW. IN FACT WE ARE ONE OF THE VERY FEW COUNTRIES WHICH HAS NEVER HAD A WOMAN PORTRAYED ON A CIRCULATING COIN.

WHY SUSAN B. ANTHONY? TODAY WE HAVE THE UNIQUE OPPORTUNITY TO RECOGNIZE AND HONOR ALL WOMEN OF OUR GREAT COUNTRY BY PLACING THE PORTRAIT OF A WOMAN ON THIS COIN, WHOSE ILLUSTRIOUS CAREER SPANNED THE 19TH CENTURY, AND WHO, PERHAPS MORE THAN ANY OTHER WOMAN, CHANGED OUR LIVES THROUGH HER SINGLE MINDED DEVOTION TO THE PRINCIPLE THAT ALL AMERICANS MUST PARTICIPATE IN A DEMOCRACY. SHE REALIZED MORE COMPLETELY THAN ANYONE ELSE THAT IN ORDER FOR THE WOMEN OF AMERICA TO TRULY PARTICIPATE AS AMERICAN CITIZENS, THEY HAD TO BE GIVEN THE RIGHT TO VOTE. IN 1848, SHE LAID THE GROUNDWORK FOR THE PASSAGE OF THE 19TH AMENDMENT. IN THE YEARS BEFORE THE CIVIL WAR, SHE

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WAS ONE OF THE KEY ORGANIZERS OF A SERIES OF STATE AND NATIONAL WOMEN'S CONVENTIONS ON THIS ISSUE. IN ADDITION, FROM 1854 ON SHE ORGANIZED COUNTY-BY-COUNTY CANVASSES IN WHICH SHE AND OTHERS WENT FROM DOOR-TO-DOOR OBTAINING SIGNATURES ON PETITIONS TO THE LEGISLATURE DEMANDING WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE. DESCRIBED BY ONE FRIEND AS THE "NAPOLEON OF THE WOMEN'S RIGHTS MOVEMENT", SHE WAS UNDAUNTED BY THE STRONG AND SOMETIMES BITTER OPPOSITION SHE FACED IN HER EFFORTS.

ALONG WITH HER WORK IN THE SUFFRAGE MOVEMENT, SHE WAS ONE OF THE PRINCIPLE ORGANIZERS OF THE ABOLITIONIST MOVEMENT AND CAMPAIGNED EXTENSIVELY FOR BLACK SUFFRAGE. DURING THE CIVIL WAR SHE ORGANIZED THE WOMEN'S LOYAL NATIONAL LEAGUE WHICH SECURED HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS OF SIGNATURES ON PETITIONS CALLING FOR EMANCIPATION OF AMERICAN BLACKS. HOWEVER, WHEN THE 14TH AMENDMENT FAILED TO ENFRANCHISE WOMEN, SHE REDOUBLED HER EFFORTS TO WORK FOR WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE. SHE WORKED NOT ONLY FOR AN AMENDMENT TO THE FEDERAL CONSTITUTION, BUT ORGANIZED EFFORTS AT THE STATE LEVEL.

SHE AND ELIZABETH STANTON FOUNDED THE NATIONAL WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE ASSOCIATION IN 1869. THE FIRST REAL SUCCESS OF THE MOVEMENT WAS THE GRANTING OF THE RIGHT TO VOTE TO WOMEN BY THE WYOMING TERRITORIAL GOVERNMENT IN 1870. BUT FOR THE MOST PART MS. ANTHONY AND THOSE WHO WORKED WITH HER WATCHED STATE LEGISLATURES AND THE CONGRESS REJECT, TIME AFTER TIME, THE GRANTING OF WOMEN THE RIGHT TO VOTE. IT IS LARGELY DUE TO

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MS. ANTHONY'S EFFORTS THAT HER GROUP MERGED WITH THE AMERICAN WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE ASSOCIATION IN 1890 AND THE GROUNDWORK WAS LAID FOR THE ULTIMATE SUCCESSFUL CAMPAIGN FOR THE PASSAGE OF THE 19TH AMENDMENT.

SUSAN B. ANTHONY RETAINED HER LEADERSHIP OF THE WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE MOVEMENT UNTIL HER DEATH IN 1906 AT THE AGE OF 86. UNFORTUNATELY SHE NEVER LIVED TO SEE THE FRUITION OF HER VALIENT EFFORTS. RATIFICATION, GIVING WOMEN THE RIGHT TO VOTE, DID NOT OCCUR UNTIL 1920, SOME 15 YEARS LATER. HER MOTTO "FAILURE IS IMPOSSIBLE" IS AS APPLICABLE TODAY TO THOSE OF US WHO BELIEVE IN HUMAN RIGHTS THROUGHOUT THE WORLD. ALL AMERICANS AND IN PARTICULAR WOMEN, OWE HER A TREMENDOUS DEBT OF GRATITUDE FOR HER UNDAUNTING COURAGE IN HER SINGLE MINDED CRUSADE TO ATTAIN THIS PRECIOUS DEMOCRATIC RIGHT-TO-VOTE.

THE PORTRAYAL OF "MISS LIBERTY" HAS BEEN FOUND ON AMERICAN COINS FROM THE 18TH CENTURY TO THE 1960'S. CURRENTLY, WE HAVE ESTABLISHED A TRADITION IN THE 20TH CENTURY IN THIS COUNTRY OF HONORING OUTSTANDING AMERICAN MEN BY PLACING THEIR PORTRAITS ON OUR CIRCULATING COINAGE, BEGINNING WITH ABRAHAM LINCOLN ON THE COPPER PENNY IN 1909. SINCE THEN, OUR CIRCULATING COINAGE SHOWS THOMAS JEFFERSON ON THE NICKEL, GEORGE WASHINGTON ON THE 25 CENT PIECE, FRANKLIN ROOSEVELT ON THE DIME, AND BENJAMIN FRANKLIN AND JOHN F. KENNEDY ON THE 50 CENT PIECE.

WITHOUT EXCEPTION ALL OF OUR CIRCULATING COINS NOW HONOR AMERICANS -- NOT ABSTRACTIONS -- INDIVIDUAL MEN WHO HAVE EARNED

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THEIR PLACE IN OUR NATION'S HISTORY. IS THERE ANY REASON WHY WE CANNOT HONOR A WOMAN WHO ACTUALLY LIVED? MUST WE RETAIN A MYTHOLOGICAL FIGURE? IT HAS BEEN SAID THAT ALL WOMEN CAN IDENTIFY WITH THE MYTHOLOCIAL PORTRAYAL OF MISS LIBERTY, BUT I WOULD LIKE TO RESPOND BY SAYING THAT THERE IS ONE ISSUE WITH WHICH I AM SURE THAT THE RAINBOW OF AMERICAN WOMEN IN OUR COUNTRY OF EVERY RACE, CREED AND PHILOSOPHY CAN MUTUALLY IDENTIFY -- IT IS THE RIGHT TO EXPRESS OURSELVES AT THE BALLOT BOX -- THE DEMOCRATIC RIGHT TO VOTE. TRULY SUSAN B. ANTHONY WHO IS PRINCIPALLY RESPONSIBLE FOR ENABLING WOMEN TO EXERCISE THIS DEMOCRATIC RIGHT REPRESENTS AMERICAN WOMEN FAR BETTER THAN THE ILL-CONCEIVED CONTEMPORARY DESIGN OFFERED TO US BY THE U.S. TREASURY. SUSAN B. ANTHONY IS MISS LIBERTY AND ONCE MORE SHE IS AN AMERICAN WHO HELPED AMERICANS ACHIEVE THE LIBERTY AND FREEDOM WE NOW ENJOY.

THE PROPOSAL TO PLACE SUSAN B. ANTHONY ON THE NEW DOLLAR COIN HAS GENERATED SOME CONTROVERSY AND OPPOSITION FROM OUR OWN TREASURY DEPARTMENT. THAT IS NOT SURPRISING. SUSAN ANTHONY GENERATED CONTROVERSY AND FACED OPPOSITION ALL HER LIFE. THIS FACT DID NOT DETER HER FROM HER NOBLE CAUSE. WE WELCOME THE OPPORTUNITY NOW TO SPEAK UP FOR HER. IT WOULD BE A VERY SPECIAL HONOR TO HAVE THIS WOMAN'S PORTRAIT PLACED ON THE NEW DOLLAR COIN. BY DOING SO WE HONOR ALL AMERICANS WHO CHERISH THEIR DEMOCRACY, AND THEIR LIBERTY, WHICH HAS AS ITS FUNDAMENTAL CONCEPT THE RIGHT TO VOTE.

O- Ill-conceived goal - not artist portrait - looked as if were just planning to go ahead Hope well & needs

F- Very persuasive argument for real woman, rep. one who is a symbol of liberty

WE ASK THE SUBCOMMITTEE TO RESPOND FAVORABLY TO OUR LEGISLATION.

Leach - placing both might cause some controversy

O- Response to Leach - Both very important; think both should be honored individually + separately - Tubman on 13¢ stamp; think she should be on 15¢

END

L- Any decision controversial; not impressed w/ lack of backbone by the Admin - deeply disappo, + distressed

O- No response from Treasury -